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SUBJECT: SUDAN - NGOS BRIEF AA/AFR ON CURRENT CHALLENGES

REF: Khartoum 1680

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Summary

1. On November 21, representatives from the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Steering Committee and other USAID implementing partners briefed the Assistant Administrator for USAID's Africa Bureau (AA/AFR) Kate Almquist on the current operating environment in Sudan. The NGOs reported that their most pressing concern was responding to Sudanese government intentions to forcibly disarm Kalma internally displaced person (IDP) camp. NGOs raised concerns over focusing on recovery and development activities in Darfur, stating that in the current operating environment these activities are not feasible or appropriate. The NGOs also urged the USG to advocate for the extension of the moratorium on restrictions, which is set to expire at the end of January 2008, in order to avoid delays in implementing humanitarian activities. End Summary.

Plans to Disarm Kalma IDP Camp Raise Concerns

2. According to the NGOs, the Sudanese government has escalated pressure to support the return of IDPs in Darfur. The increasing pressure for returns is occurring at the same time that fighting and insecurity continues to displace thousands of people. NGOs stated that the recent incident in Kalma IDP camp, which led to the displacement of approximately 30,000 IDPs from the camp due to inter-tribal fighting and the forced relocation of Kalma IDPs from Otash IDP camp (REFTEL), should be viewed in the larger context of increasing pressure on returns. As of November 23, humanitarian agencies have not been able to verify the whereabouts of an estimated 10,000 IDPs who fled Kalma camp on October 18 (and 18. Qs. On November 09, the Afvion "U-i_n Eh3siolo0Wud`n, (aOS(-anese government will "take all necessary measures" to seize all remaining weapons in the camp. The letter also mentions that the Sudanese government, along with AMIS, is responsible for the safety of IDPs and is implementing this disarmament campaign to protect the IDPs.

4. The NGOs noted significant concern over this proposed disarmament plan and requested USG support in responding to the issue. NGOs asked that the USG speak out against any forced disarmament in the camp and support a phased disarmament plan that is coupled with political negotiations. NGOs also stated that establishing the UN-AU Mission in Sudan (UNAMID) police force for Kalma camp is urgently needed to monitor the volatile situation. Further, the NGOs asked that USAID pressure the UN to agree on a common position on forced returns to avoid ambiguity between agencies and enable rapid, unified responses from the UN to evolving situations.

5. Comment: In the current environment, a UNAMID attempt to disarm IDPs could be problematic as it would be perceived as disarming only

one party to the conflict. However, weapons proliferation in IDP camps is a significant security concern that needs to be addressed to improve the safety and stability in IDP camps across Darfur. USAID is closely monitoring the situation in Kalma camp through field officers in Nyala, South Darfur, and working with USAID implementing partners to continue to provide humanitarian services in Kalma camp and reduce protection risks for those IDPs who fled Kalma. On November 30, the CDA and USAID Mission Director plan to travel to Nyala to urge restraint by the Sudanese government and encourage non-violent solutions to the issue of armed elements in Kalma camp. End Comment.

Too Early for Recovery in Darfur

¶6. NGOs expressed concern over the discussions to resume the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (DJAM) meetings, stating that it is too early to be focusing on recovery efforts in Darfur. The NGOs

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believe that recovery and development activities should be a peace dividend for Darfurians and that focusing efforts on these activities now is misguided as humanitarian access is at its lowest point. The NGOs also expressed concern that planning for recovery and development activities plays into the hands of the Sudanese government, which is encouraging IDPs to return to rural areas despite pervasive insecurity and ongoing fighting throughout Darfur. NGOs also want to see the macro-level peace process accompanied by a parallel process that focuses on resolving local land issues. (Note: Conflict drivers in Darfur include access to land, land use, and access to water. When the 2.2 million people displaced by the ongoing conflict decide to return home, complex issues over land rights and land tenure will arise and need to be effectively resolved. End Note.)

¶7. AA/AFR Almquist agreed that in the current environment implementing recovery and development activities in Darfur is not appropriate or feasible, but stressed the need to have a viable recovery and reconstruction plan in place. Almquist also noted that, even in Darfur, windows of opportunity for small-scale development projects may appear and the humanitarian community needs to be prepared to seize them when the opportunity arises. USAID will continue to work with partners to plan and prepare for recovery and development activities in Darfur to ensure that aid agencies can rapidly switch gears from humanitarian to recovery activities when the time is right. NGOs mentioned that their Darfur programs have numerous peacebuilding components that could easily link into early recovery activities at the appropriate time.

Addressing the Perception Problem

¶8. NGOs also stated that more funding for recovery activities in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas is needed and reiterated the frequently expressed sentiment that the people are not seeing peace dividends. Further, the NGOs noted that there is frustration in the Three Areas that the aid activities are Khartoum-managed and highlighted that recovery in the Three Areas is a critical priority for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

¶9. USAID regularly hears the complaint that Sudanese people feel that nothing has changed in Southern Sudan since the signing of the CPA and continues to grapple with how to address this perception. AA/AFR Almquist noted that although we have a long way to go in Southern Sudan, there are visible improvements throughout the region since the CPA was signed, particularly in Juba where many people are building new houses and economic activity has markedly increased. Almquist said it was important for the humanitarian community to not only focus on what still needed to be done, but to also acknowledge the huge contribution from the humanitarian community and the results that have been achieved. While additional recovery efforts are certainly needed and life is still difficult for many Southern Sudanese, USAID and its NGO partners need to work together to ensure that communities are better informed of improvements.

¶10. AA/AFR Almquist has cleared this cable.

FERNANDEZ